

ABOUT SEATTLE COMMUNITY COURT

Opened in March 2005, the community court served only the downtown commercial area during its pilot phase. In January 2007, the community court, which is housed in the city's centralized courthouse, expanded its jurisdiction to the entire city of Seattle. While the court is open for business on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, its Resource Center is open Monday through Friday.

● **TYPES OF CASES**

The community court handles low-level misdemeanors, including theft, prostitution, trespassing, patronizing a prostitute and alcohol related offenses.

● **ELIGIBILITY**

The Seattle City Attorney's Office screens defendants for the following eligibility criteria: a defendant must have committed a diversion-eligible crime, must not present a public safety risk and must not have more than two prior community court adjudications.

● **AREA SERVED**

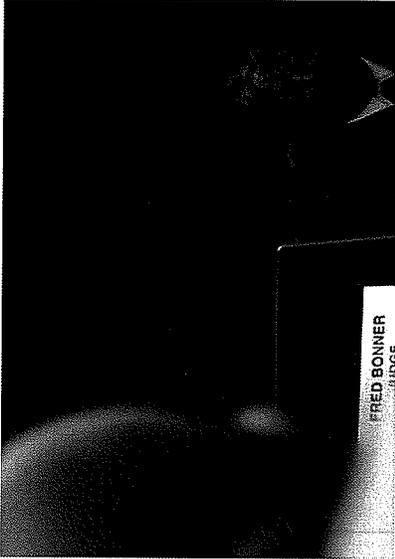
The community court expanded its jurisdiction from the downtown business district to the entire city in January 2007.

● **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

The court engages the community in a number of ways—for example, chartering a Community Advisory Board; partnering with 25 community organizations as community service sites; employing a wide range of volunteers (including AmeriCorps members) and staffing a centralized location for all social service contacts.

● **PROGRAM CAPACITY**

Over 1,000 defendants opted into the community court in 2009, up from over 850 in 2008. The court has a maximum annual capacity of about 1,800 to 2,000 defendants. The community court has had over 3,000 clients since it opened in March 2005.



Community Court Judge Fred Bonner

"Community court holds offenders accountable but also provides them with the help they need to change their lives."

– Member of community court social services team

● **PRETRIAL DIVERSION PROGRAM**

First-time offenders who come through the community court and commit diversion-eligible crimes are given an opportunity to have their charges dismissed and retain a clean criminal record. Since the program began in 2007 through December 31 2009, 2,091 first-time offenders opted into the Pretrial Diversion Program and completed 13,571 hours of community service.

● **SOCIAL SERVICE CONTACTS**

All defendants opting into community court are mandated to make an initial contact with each identified social service link after being assessed for social service needs. Over 15 social service organizations have partnered with the community court to help defendants address issues in their lives such as homelessness, unemployment, mental illness and chemical dependency or drugs/alcohol problems.

RESULTS

● **COMMUNITY SERVICE HOURS**

Between the pretrial diversion program and regular community court defendants, 5,436 participants performed more than 52,463 hours of community service—the equivalent of approximately \$500,000 worth of labor.

● **REDUCED CRIME**

A 2009 independent evaluation showed that community court participants committed 66% fewer offenses within 18 months of court intervention while the control group showed an increase of 50%.

● **JAIL SAVINGS**

The Seattle Mayor's Office of Policy and Management estimates that the community court saved the city \$1,513,209 in the court's first three years of operation through reduced recidivism and jail use.

"This court has helped me towards getting my life back on track."

– Community court defendant

MORE INFORMATION

To learn more, schedule a site visit, or receive assistance from mentors at the Seattle Community Court, contact:

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<http://seattle.gov/communitycourt/>

The Regional Network of Mentor Community Courts

Community courts in Dallas, Hartford, and Seattle serve as mentors for jurisdictions that want to do a better job combating neighborhood crime. The three courts work with the **Center for Court Innovation** to provide guidance in developing strategies that combine accountability (such as mandatory participation in community restitution projects) with help (such as links to drug treatment and job training).

For more information, visit the Center for Court Innovation's Regional Network of Mentor Community Courts page at:

www.courtinnovation.org/mentorcourts.html

The Regional Network of Mentor Community Courts is sponsored by the **Center for Court Innovation** and the **Bureau of Justice Assistance**.

The **Center for Court Innovation** is a non-profit think tank that helps courts and criminal justice agencies aid victims, reduce crime, and improve public trust in justice. The center combines action and reflection to spark problem-solving innovation both locally and internationally.

The **Bureau of Justice Assistance** is a component of the Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. The **Bureau of Justice Assistance** supports law

enforcement, courts, corrections, treatment, victim services, technology, and prevention initiatives that strengthen the nation's criminal justice system.



"Community service workers are treated with respect and dignity, which is a first step in reintegrating them into the community."

— A community volunteer who helps supervise neighborhood clean-up crews

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INNOVATION

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Seattle Community Court

A Member of
the Regional Network of
Mentor Community Courts

A peer network to support the
exchange of best practices